

Why cake?

The all-age address given by Professor David Sawkins at the Rosyth Methodist Church service of Morning Worship on the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, 21 January 2024

Introduction

One of the TV programmes I try and watch over the Christmas break is the Royal Institution Christmas Lectures.

Each year a leading scientist explores an important scientific problem or challenge and this year Mike Wooldridge, professor of computer science at the University of Oxford, gave a series of lectures on artificial intelligence, or AI. They're well worth a watch.

Now what makes these lectures good to watch is that they aren't just someone speaking. They always have fun demonstrations. Things that go pop or bang, or make you go 'wow!'. They show you how the science works.

Now I did a bit of science at school and, whilst this isn't the Royal Institution, I thought I would have scientific demonstration for you. So hold onto your seats, and put your fingers in your ears if you need to, I'll just get all the kit over.

[gets cake]

And here it is. My scientific experiment is a cake.



The Science of Baking

Wait a minute you say, that's not science, that's baking.

Well, there's a lot of science in baking.

First of all there's chemistry. You have to know what ingredients to combine in the cake and how they will react with each other. In this case flour, sugar and eggs.

Then there's maths. You have to get the ingredients in the right proportions. This one is 6/6/6 and three eggs. Six ounces of flour, six ounces of butter and six ounces of sugar with three eggs.

Then there's physics. You have to understand how heat transfer works. And what temperature to bake it and how long for.

So, science can tell us all about the cake and it is very, very good at doing that.

Why the cake was made

But there is one thing, one rather important thing about my cake that science can tell us absolutely nothing about.

It can tell me how the cake was made – yes. But it can't tell me why the cake was made.

All the science in the world won't be able to tell me that. To know why the cake was made you have to ask the person that made it.

In this case that person was me, and I made it because I wanted to use it in this talk and then I wanted to share it over tea and coffee after church.





Why the earth and why we were made

And here's the thing.

Science is good, really very, very good at telling us about the earth and us human beings and how we work. There are lots of things that scientists are still working on and it's great and important work.

But science doesn't and it can't tell us why the earth was made, or why we were made.

Or, to put it another way, it can't tell us why there is something (all this) rather than nothing.

For that we need to know WHY it was all made.

Now, the best scientists know this very well.

They know that you won't find why in a scientific textbook or a recipe book.

Instead, we believe, the clues to why the world and we were made are found in the stories that we read in the Bible.

Because they tell us about God. About why he made us, and what we are here for.

And the answer is quite simple.

Why did he make it all? He made everything because he is love.

And what are we here for? We are here, our purpose in life, is to love him and to love each other (our neighbours) as we love ourselves.

And in doing so to enjoy and live life, which is his gift, to the very full.

So we are going to sing about that now. About praising God and about joy.

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising
(Singing the Faith 76)